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Author(s): John Haines
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Living troubadours and other recent uses for medieval music

JOHN HAINES

Abstract

This essay aims to expand on existing narratives of medieval music performance by exploring recent interpretations of the troubadours. Recent advances in the field of ethnomusicology, popular music and medieval music reception suggest the need to view medieval music performance in ways other than the conventional narrative of early music performance. This article focuses on the troubadours, originally song-makers in the late medieval Midi, or South of France. Based on my interviews with recent 'living troubadours' in the United States and France, I present evidence for multifarious musical interpretations of the art de trobar, *or medieval troubadour art. Living troubadours under consideration here include Eco-Troubadour Stan Slaughter from Missouri and Occitan rap group Massilia Sound System from Marseille. The latter claim a special distinction as living descendants of the original troubadours; the former views himself as more remotely related to medieval music. And while all the different musicians considered here offer widely contrasting interpretations of the medieval* art de trobar, *they do have in common certain recent musical influences, along with a view of folk music as an open-ended, and musically flexible category. All of these artists are also united in their belief that the essence of folk song is an urgent message which, though it may range from recycling to anti-centralist politics, consistently controls the musical medium. What the groups considered here have in common with traditional early music groups is their creative use of contemporary influences to evoke for their audience the Middle Ages.*

The Mediæval Bæbes have just stepped on stage in a darkly lit club on this, their spring North American tour; they are celebrating the release of their fourth album, *The Rose*.[1] Eight microphone stands laced with ivy welcome the Mediæval Bæbes, who walk on stage all robed in colourful, lengthy dresses, some wearing large hats. The audience tonight is an odd mixture of young and old, all a little unsure of how to behave in a venue for mostly pop bands. At first politely clapping after each song, the audience will eventually muster up enough courage for a few judiciously timed hollers by evening's end, as they beckon the Mediæval Bæbes back on stage for their last number. For now, though, we reverently listen as the words of the opening song are spoken over a mesmerising ostinato coupling dulcimer and recorders: 'I am Eve, great Adam's wife . . .'. The song is followed by a spoken introduction from black-haired Marie Findley, one of the group's members. She explains that the Mediæval Bæbes 'sing medieval music . . . and wear what some would consider crazy costumes' in order to escape a too mundane present. Their opening number tonight, 'I am Eve', is a double diachronic escape, their arrangement of an eleventh-century anonymous Irish poem which conjures up the voice of the First Woman. It is a reminder of the complex construct which we call the Middle Ages: colourful yet dark, mysterious yet within reach. As kitsch as they may seem to the experts, for their converted audience

tonight, the Mediæval Bæbes have returned to the Middle Ages some of its colour and mystery.

One of the songs which the Mediæval Bæbes will sing that night – and to which I shall return at the end of this essay – is by a medieval troubadour, Bernart de Ventadorn. So integral are the troubadours to the modern vision of the Middle Ages that Bernart's famous 'lark song' manages to find its way on to this concert stage. If the Mediæval Bæbes, with their blend of pop Goth sound and Victorian dress, exemplify a fairly recent re-envisioning of medieval times, the medieval troubadours whose music they borrow have been the subject of an eight-century reception, as I argue elsewhere (Haines, forthcoming). From the late thirteenth-century chansonniers, through modern antiquarian, archaeological and philological approaches, both scholarly and popular, the medieval troubadours yielded a ubiquitous musical stereotype: the wandering minstrel, melancholically strumming his lute at his lady's window. All of the 'living troubadours' surveyed in the following essay, interviewed in the summer of 2001, in some way partake of this long-standing stereotype, and appeal to both creativity and authenticity. The medieval troubadours were not resurrected in the nineteenth century, as is sometimes believed. A fascination with and stereotyping of them goes back to the late Middle Ages and is perpetuated to this day.

The Mediæval Bæbes' recent success is just one sign of a long-standing public obsession with music of the Middle Ages. The late twentieth century has witnessed a dramatic increase of historical performance groups specialising in medieval music (Haskell 1988). Medieval music has found both a looser interpretation and a broader reception in various forms of pop, from heavy metal to electronica, one example being Enigma's controversial 1990 hit 'Sadness'. Explicitly connected to the Middle Ages in another way has been electronic trance music (e.g. deep trance and dark wave), especially the so-called Gothic or Goth trend (see Thompson 2000, pp. 62–73 and Mercer 1993). For example, the Dead Can Dance made use of such medieval material as a *saltarello* in their piece by the same name (*Aion*, track 2). The enduring influence of Goth musical culture is still seen in types of heavy metal (e.g. dark metal). Medieval music also continues to be frequently evoked in scores of such movies as *Black Knight* (2001, dir. Gil Junger). To this dissemination should be added the many madrigal dinners and medieval-Renaissance fairs regularly put on throughout the world. It seems that the Middle Ages have never been more popular than at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

It is puzzling, then, that, just as public interest in music of the Middle Ages swells, the field of medieval music study, long the most prestigious area of musicology, has been dwindling in popularity. Indeed, medieval musicology has been accused of not staying abreast of recent academic trends. Musicology's formative period is partly to blame for this. The study of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance has dominated musicological studies for most of the twentieth century. In due course, the founding fathers' favourite periods were hounded as contaminated by old-fashioned approaches and resistant to newer ones. The now famous 1985 critique by Joseph Kerman (himself an erstwhile early music scholar), which no doubt expressed earlier unpublished discontent, was followed by others calling for change in musicological work on the Middle Ages. Judith Peraino (2001) has even recently written of medieval studies' 'public relations problems' within the academic community, and for good reason. The Middle Ages have barely registered on New Musicology's radar. The result is that the heyday of medieval music studies appears to

be over. Barbara Haggh suggests that the reason for this is medieval musicology's failure to interact enough with research outside its discipline, an argument that can perhaps be reconciled with Joseph Kerman's earlier contention that musicology was not interdisciplinary enough (Haggh 1996, p. 95).

Either way, there is an irony here which has not received sufficient press. In its earliest phase, musicology denoted primarily medieval music study (Haines 2001B, p. 21; Aubry 1900). Around 1900, Pierre Aubry concocted a new musical science (*musicologie*) from primarily three disciplines: palaeography, and two quite recent and innovative ones at the time, archaeology and philology – in other words, a novel, interdisciplinary conjunction on a grand scale. Early musicologists such as Aubry and those immediately following him were trained outside of music, and their resulting interdisciplinarity continued to characterise medieval musicology for some time. For example, one of the ideas dear to Friedrich Gennrich, arguably the most prolific scholar of medieval music in the first half of the twentieth century, was the close interaction of philology and its younger sister musicology (Gennrich 1918; Haines 2004). It could fairly be said, therefore, that medieval music studies, although today maligned for a certain backwardness, can nevertheless boast a long-standing tradition of novel and interdisciplinary approaches.

The performance possibilities of medieval music

So it is hardly surprising that certain medievalists have recently produced work suggesting that the study of medieval music needs a make-over – just as New Musicology is beginning to show its age. Christopher Page's 1993 critique of medieval musicology quickly received its own critique which persisted for four years in non-period specific musicological journals like *Music & Letters*, and thus attesting to the still healthy presence of medieval music study within the musicological community at large (summary in Peraino 2001, pp. 213–14, esp. no. 11). Where Page had questioned traditional historiographic assumptions, other scholars have proposed the application of post-structural theory to medieval music and theory (e.g. Fast 1996). Another notable related body of work has made use, in one way or other, of reception theory. Long known to literary scholars, reception and reader-response theories have emphasised the reader's role in the interpretation and creation of texts. Reception theory is especially appropriate to medieval music which, in addition to a certain fluidity owing to its predominantly oral transmission, has been subjected to a more thorough interpretation than, say, Romantic opera. Studying the various interpretations of medieval music requires learning about different readers' 'horizon of expectation' (*Erwartungshorizont*), an expression which reception theory exponent Hans-Robert Jauss has popularised. As Jauss has put it, 'a literary work is not an object that . . . offers the same view to each reader in each period . . . It is much more like an orchestration that strikes ever new resonances among its readers' – an even more appropriate metaphor in the case of music (Jauss as cited in Haines forthcoming, introduction). Significantly for this essay, reception theory is influential in the study of popular music (see Negus 1999; Frith 1996).

Medievalists' paths to reception study have more often than not come by way of their traditional interest in historiography, given the weight of secondary literature in the field of chant, in particular. This burden of a lengthy history of scholarship has recently prompted suggestions for other ways of writing medieval music history. In his critique of several historical surveys, Mark Everist concluded that 'writing a

history of medieval music that consists of more than a chronicle is one of the most urgent tasks facing musicologists of the 21st century' (1993, p. 53). An initial step in this direction has been the recent spate of historiographic work, which has, whether intentionally or not, contributed to medieval music reception. Several books on chant reception appeared in the 1990s, and this has highlighted the need for historiographic renewal (e.g. Daly 1995; Bergeron 1998; Zon 1999). Anna Maria Busse Berger has recently (2002) argued that the monumental work of Friedrich Ludwig was fraught with his own religious and ideological presuppositions which affected his conclusions regarding the Notre Dame repertory in particular (see also Haines 2003). In my recent detailing of the Beck–Aubry scandal, I outlined some of the nationalistic biases operative in the quarrel over the modal theory; I also pointed to the potential for medieval music reception as a separate field of study (Haines 2001C). Daniel Leech-Wilkinson's *The Modern Invention of Medieval Music* (2002) may be considered the first full-length study in this field. One of the significant advances of Leech-Wilkinson's work in this area is his emphasis on medieval music as performed, not just studied.

One motivation for turning to reception studies has been the presence of medieval themes in popular culture mentioned earlier. In a series of studies focusing on recordings of medieval music, Robert Lug has surveyed the wide panorama of such representations: not only conventional historicising approaches, but also the more neglected popular interpretations (Lug 1988, 1989, 1993, 2001A). The latter range from 1960s folk to 1990s 'alternative'. These are of special interest since they constitute the greater part of medieval music reception. As Lug has recently written: 'The erstwhile no-man's land between serious and popular music has in the meantime been colonised by a rich vegetation of "undefinable" styles and labels in which one could include the realm of "world music" [*Ethno-musik*]; and thanks to this relaxation of borders, many groups already have settled in these regions' (2001B, p. 173). Lug's work has thus documented the assimilation of contemporary musics in the historical project of imagining medieval music.

Much more remains to be done in the interaction between popular music and medieval music studies. The two overlap in their preoccupation with the troublesome topic of authenticity. In early music studies, authenticity moved to the forefront of scholarly concern around 1980 (Taruskin 1995, pp. 3–47). The key question here has been the extent to which performers could confidently claim they were reproducing sounds made in the Middle Ages. In the last two decades of the twentieth century, performers and scholars could no longer optimistically proclaim, as Thomas Binkley had in the 1960s, that one could bring 'the performance of this music close to the elusive original' (Binkley cited in Haines 2001C, p. 374). Instead, they have begun acknowledging and even exploring the extent to which contemporary sounds influenced historical performances. Meanwhile, beginning in the 1990s, the question of authenticity was raised in the younger field of popular music. A good case study is Richard Peterson's account of how country music has appealed to authenticity, a 'socially agreed-upon construct', as he puts it (Peterson 1997, pp. 5 and 205–20 and the literature cited there). To bring up another area which I will soon discuss in greater detail, French rap music groups have often made social protest lyrics a voucher of their authenticity (Boucher 1998). This recent scholarship demonstrates that performers of popular music, just like early music performers, have used authentic claims to privilege one style over another. Moving outside and in between the two fields of popular music and early music, in their often uneasy relationship which I would like

to explore in this essay, authenticity is wielded once again. As Johan Fornäs has put it, authenticity serves to place and privilege genres in a custom-made hierarchy. For some, 'art and folk music are classified as authentic in opposition to mass-produced popular music'; others 'conceive the popular as more genuine than upper-class elite art' (Fornäs 1994, p. 156).

The reception of music of the Middle Ages offers an excellent convergence of popular and historical genres, in which we can explore authenticity and other issues from a variety of perspectives; all the more so since most medieval music scholarship has almost exclusively focussed on certain kinds of interpretations, and the writing of this history has typically followed a somewhat prescribed narrative. The performances of choice have been those within or revolving near the academic environment, especially *collegia musica*. In his seminal narrative of the 'historical performance movement', Joseph Kerman (1985) placed its origins in the 1800s, moving from the pioneer Arnold Dolmetsch to the heydays of 'applied musicology', and finally to the crisis on the issue of authenticity, newly erupted at the time of his writing. Histories published since then have not strayed too far from this outline. Harry Haskell (1988), for example, puts the emphasis squarely on academic performances, lionising Arnold Dolmetsch as an originator and 'the apostle of retrogression', and culminating in the 'authenticity crisis'. To sum up these narratives: a forgotten early music is resurrected in recent times and gradually polished up to achieve a historically informed performance practice.

Corroborating Lug's research cited earlier, ethnomusicologist Kay Shelemay (2001) has recently indirectly challenged what we might call this early-music-revival narrative by proposing that early music concerns include contemporary music culture.[2] Her fascinating 'ethnomusicology of the early music movement' reveals that the deceptively familiar field of Western music performance is also an Other which can be subjected to ethnographic study. One of the most interesting points to emerge from her study is that 'early music' is 'new music'; it is telling that newly composed pieces are sometimes performed with historical repertoires. By proposing an ethnomusicology of early music, Shelemay opens up some interesting possibilities in the study of this Other, not the least of which is that of offering complementary narratives of medieval music performance. Just 'what is early music and what are its boundaries?', Shelemay asks her interviewees. An uneasy mixture of past and present emerges as the answer to this question (Shelemay 2001, pp. 8–10).

This is no news, of course. The ambiguities of early music have been acknowledged since at least 1980 in the debate surrounding authenticity discussed earlier. The tension of authenticity is especially apparent in performances combining contemporary styles with historical traditions, such as the early music ensemble Studio der frühen Musik's 1976 album *L'agonie du Languedoc*. This recording freely re-interprets troubadour songs by connecting the plight of Southern France (a.k.a. Occitania) during the Albigensian Crusade (1209–1212) with contemporary Southern France's struggle for cultural and linguistic independence. By the late twentieth century, the dialects and traditions of Occitania (which includes the Languedoc region) were being increasingly threatened by French cultural forces rapidly encroaching thanks to modern communication media. The response to this was the movement known as Occitanism. The 1970s was a time of heightened Occitanist activism and a propitious period for the Studio der frühen Musik's collaboration with Claude Marti, one of the leading proponents of Occitanism (Marti 1998). Their album revisits troubadour songs such as Peire Cardenal's 'Tartarassa ni vòutór', a

thirteenth-century political *sirventes* for which only the words survive; Peire deplores the corruption of clergy and rulers in the period following the Albigensian Crusade. In their musical setting of this poem, the Studio der frühen Musik mixes the plight of the thirteenth-century South with its modern Occitanist one. Interspersed by recitations from the chronicle of the Albigensian Crusade, Marti's passionate voice declaims the text. Here is the first strophe of this song (Old Occitan in Lavaud 1957, p. 490):

Tartarassa ni vòutór
No sent tan leu carn pudén
Quom clerc e prezicadór
Senton ont es lo manén.
Mantenen son sei privat,
E quant malautia-l bat,
Fan li far donassïo
Tel que-l paren no-i an pró.

(Neither buzzard nor vulture can so easily detect their prey's odour as clerics and preachers sniffing out a rich man. They shamelessly court him and, when disease hits him, they squeeze out of him such a great donation that he has nothing left for his relatives.)

It is easy to see how this song lends itself to a variety of timeless metaphorical readings. The thirteenth-century 'tartarassa' and 'vòutór' readily become those centralising Parisian forces which would plunder modern-day Languedoc and deprive it of its voice. The Studio der frühen Musik thus re-interprets this troubadour poem to fit contemporary circumstances.

An example such as this invites us to move beyond early music performances to another avenue for inquiry related to Shelemay's study – another Other altogether: popular interpretations of medieval music. It is becoming increasingly clear, thanks to medieval music reception studies, that the line between popular and historically informed performances is not always as easy to draw as acknowledged until now. Robert Lug's recent survey mentioned earlier details the slippery slope leading from post-World War II historical reconstructions to the music of bands such as the Mediæval Bæbes. In between are performances which, like that of the Studio der frühen Musik just cited, come to pop from a historical performance perspective. In the twenty-first century, the study of popular music can no longer be excluded from medieval music study. If the fusion of ethnomusicology and early music offers a 'grand anthromusicological opportunity', as Shelemay suggests (2001, p. 5), then a marriage of early music performance and popular music studies might also do the same, especially given the near total absence of popular music performances in the histories cited above.

New World troubadours

If musicology originated around 1900 in the study of medieval music, as I mentioned earlier, it is worth recalling that the study of the Middle Ages, with some attention to music, goes back at least to the sixteenth century. The troubadours offer one of the best case studies of a lengthy musical reception from the earliest antiquarian studies to the present day (see Haines, forthcoming). This lengthy reception makes clear that, more often than not, medieval studies have allowed for a multitude of interpretations, especially in the twentieth century. Though in the last century academic medievalism has distanced itself from popular culture, it is historically connected to it from the

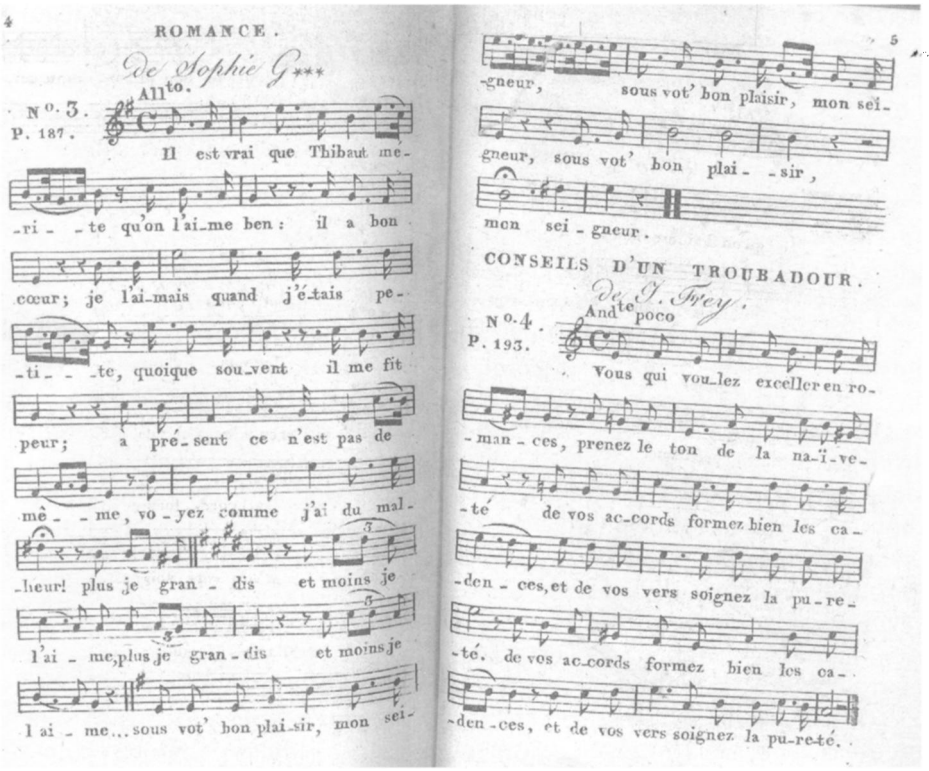
sixteenth century on, most strikingly in the historical stereotype of medieval music as naïve and carefree. It cannot be overemphasised at present that troubadour (and, by extension, medieval) music was not suddenly resurrected in the late nineteenth century, as sometimes assumed. Rather, its envisioning is owed to a complex development going back to the late Middle Ages and its writing centres which nostalgically codified past repertoires.

Today, the medieval troubadours are familiar to students of music as the authors of the first songs in the vernacular originating in twelfth-century Occitania. The thirteenth-century *vidas* (medieval biographies) of these song-makers frequently describe them as a *trobaire* or *trobador*, from *trobar*, meaning 'to find' in Old Occitan. This song-finding included music from the earliest phase. The first known troubadour, Guilhem IX Duke of Aquitaine, was reputed to both 'find' (*trobar*) and sing (*cantar*); other troubadours are praised for their gift in finding not only words (*motz*) but also melodies (*sons*) (see Aubrey 1989). From these origins, a stereotyping of troubadour art has lasted, in one form or the other, to the present day, with the term 'troubadour' receiving various interpretations. Throughout the centuries of this reception, scholarly and popular approaches have more often than not been indistinguishable. For example, a sizable body of musical settings in the so-called *genre troubadour* survives from the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries. Composers lent to their music a quintessentially medieval 'naïveté' by imitating folk and popular song (Haines forthcoming, chapter three). One such example is the song 'Conseils d'un troubadour' from the early 1800s (see Example 1).

By the nineteenth century, the term 'troubadour' could mean 'one who composes or sings verses or ballads' or 'a composer or writer in support of some cause or interest', an association which has endured to the present time (OED, vol. 18, p. 589). The term 'American troubadour' has been applied to songwriters from Stephen Foster to Ernest Tubb.

This brief etymological sketch makes clear that 'troubadour' is more than a generic signifier. It is the vehicle for a specific medieval stereotype, developed and polished through the centuries. Far from being historically innocent, 'troubadour' carries with it a deep prejudice about what we call the 'Middle Ages'. The salient features of this prejudice are found in Wilfrid Mellers' 'new troubadours'. In 1965, Mellers named singers in 'the folk-song revival movement' the 'new troubadours', their prototype being Bob Dylan. Mellers' 'new troubadours' harked back to a long-standing stereotype: to paraphrase him, a poor, wandering disenfranchised person, and a composer whose unexceptional music conveys an important message which needs to be heard in person (Mellers 1965, p. 10). Musicians in North America who nowadays adopt the moniker 'troubadour', whether consciously or not, adhere to this stereotype, one such being the Connecticut (USA) State Troubadour. In the summer of 2001, I interviewed Kevin Briody, Connecticut State Troubadour for 2001 and 2002.[3] Kevin had recently moved back to his native Connecticut from Nashville, Tennessee, where he had first sought success. But 'the market in Nashville was very pop . . . and that's not really what I was doing – I was writing more little stories; and they weren't so much pop-oriented as folk-oriented'. When I asked him to define 'folk', Kevin resisted giving an exact definition. Previous Connecticut State Troubadours were all folk musicians, he insisted.

> Some of them are more traditional folk than I am, some of them are more world music folk . . . all within different little rooms of folk music . . . Folk music is very inclusive. I guess my pure definition of folk music is 'music of the people' . . . But it's music that is of the people . . . In the



Example 1. 'Conseils d'un troubadour' by Jacques-Joseph Frey, from Le chansonnier des graçes, avec trente airs gravés *(Paris: F. Louis, 1814).*

folk circles that I travel in, sometimes people will suggest that rap music is not music or not to their liking. I don't know a lot about rap music, but that which I do know I consider to be folk music. To me, it's urban music of the people.

The essence of folk music was the troubadour's activity: 'I am writing about the world around me, and I do so with a guitar and an Irish tenor voice'. For Kevin, the validating authenticity of his activity as troubadour was in his music's unpretentiousness, its resistance to strict definition; most importantly, it was connected to 'the people'.

He nonetheless saw some relationship between himself and the medieval troubadour:

> I am trying to write about what I perceive is going on around me, and [I] deliver that message. I think that that's what was going on eight, nine hundred years ago. I think that that was the notion: whether it's delivering news or making social commentary . . . that's kind of what I am doing in a contemporary way. The point for me is to connect, to deliver something that is substantial, just . . . as guys did eight hundred years ago. That's not to say that celebrating the medieval troubadour is a bad thing, it's just a different thing.

Kevin's definition of troubadour thus linked up with the historiographic stereotype outlined above: passionate and populist. Equally, though, Kevin's authenticity resonates with Johan Fornäs' general formulation of authenticity in popular music as 'a complex affair: a real uniqueness, a speaking voice . . . a reflective longing for something else' (Fornäs 1994, p. 159).

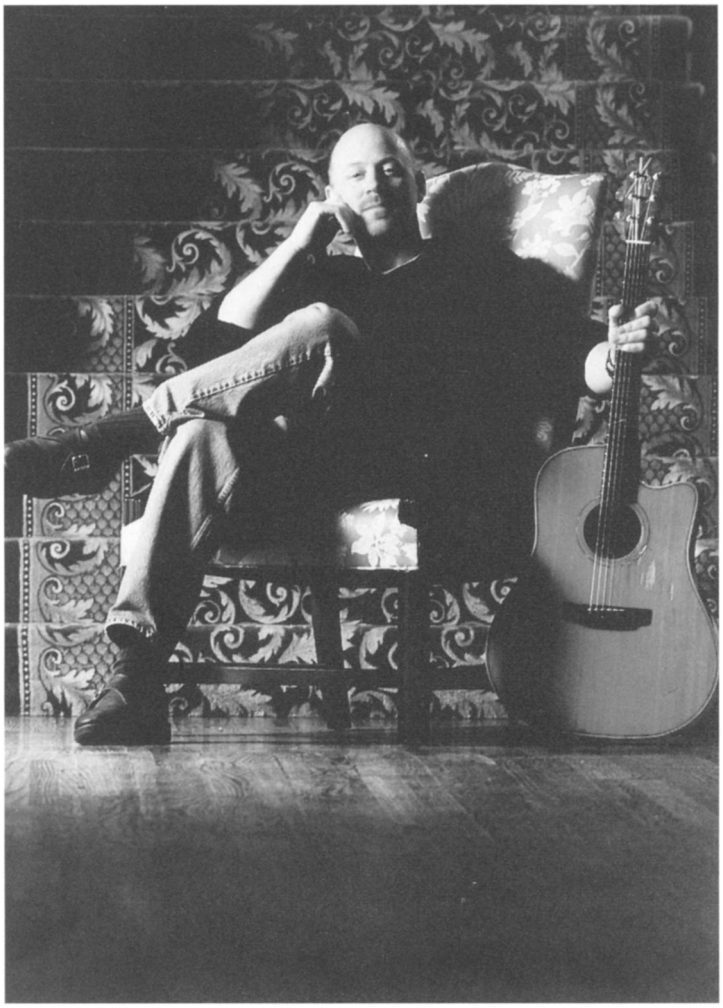


Figure 1. Kevin Briody, Connecticut State Troubadour 2001–2.

Another feature inherent to Wilfred Mellers' model, and consistent with the historical stereotype, is the troubadour's urgent message. This especially characterises such North-American variants as the Eco-troubadour. One such is Stan Slaughter, of Kansas City, Missouri, whom I interviewed over two sessions in the summer of 2001. Stan Slaughter retired from teaching to become an environmental educator in the late 1980s, giving 'Earth Day' presentations in and around Kansas City just as state funding was becoming available. 'That was the catalyst', Stan recalled; 'Missouri, Kansas, Illinois, Iowa's tax on trash has essentially been my career'.[4] Since the early 1990s, Stan has been taking his lecture-concerts to the entire US midwest, touring some five months out of the year, mostly to elementary schools and the occasional recycling conference. The mode of touring from place to place rather than radio or television coverage is crucial, since his message is somewhat subversive or ''under the radar'', as Stan puts it: 'it's only deliverable in person'.

Just what is an Eco-troubadour?, I asked. Stan admitted to not knowing much about the original troubadours, only what he had picked up in college, which did not

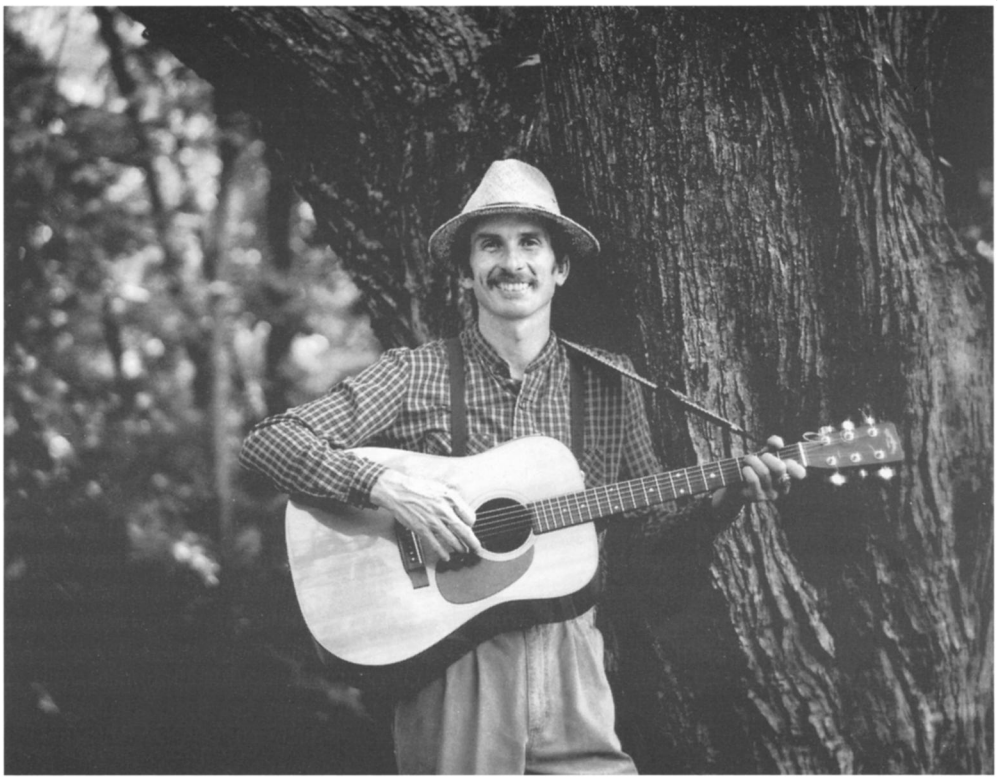


Figure 2. Stan Slaughter, Eco-troubadour.

amount to much. More important to him was the popular idea of a troubadour as one who travels and gives a message of which music is only one part.

> It's not a concert – it's the local eco-news. I'm more of a lecturer than I am a great musician. Obviously, I have to be at some level to perform in front of all these people, but it's not the most important thing. I call it performance ecology – more than just a concert.

The Eco-troubadour is 'an interpreter, someone who has taken the mantle of traveller, taken on the trials of the road in order to get the perspective and knowledge from all the destinations'. What is the Eco-troubadour's message? In a nation plagued with the world's largest waste while enjoying comparatively lax waste regulations, it is imperative to educate young school-age audiences in the United States of America about the importance of re-cycling, said Stan.

Stan described his style as most resembling that of the folk singers of the late 1960s.

> I am the earliest generation of the baby-boomers [he was born in 1946], so a lot of that idealism and [desire for] revolution and change . . . were a big part of it, along with the disillusionment of Vietnam . . . I was completely blown away by Dylan; I was a college freshman when he first came out . . . I am a part of carrying on that generational tradition of the sixties being reformers.

What defines troubadour music?, I asked him. One thing it is not is old music: 'it's the music of the time and of the troubadour, true folk music'. Thus, what made Stan's troubadour music authentic was precisely that which in historical performance

circles has traditionally been considered inauthentic: the incorporation of recent musical influences.

It is easy to see how these New World troubadours partake, whether knowingly or not, of the vast reception history of troubadour song which I described earlier. Although not included in the 'early music revival' histories mentioned earlier, they view themselves in some way as continuators of a generic *art de trobar*, the late medieval term for 'troubadour art', hence their adoption of the moniker 'troubadour'. I do not mean to suggest they perpetuate an actual medieval tradition, but rather a pervasive and persuasive interpretation of the Middle Ages. For Kevin Briody, his musical style resists definition, but it is part of a larger, eclectic whole called folk music. Both Kevin Briody and Stan Slaughter view their musical activity as reviving a more general troubadour concept rather than the specific melodies used by historical ensembles. In fact, both care very little about the historical troubadours although they are fully engaged with the historiographic stereotype. Their troubadour music and topics relate exclusively to contemporary concerns. As Kevin Briody put it, 'I am writing about the world around me' – just like, we might add, the medieval troubadours.

Occitanian troubadours

On a cool summer night at a French *chanson* festival outside Grenoble, a crowd of about 1,500 strong waits impatiently under an outdoor tent for the Occitan rap band, Massilia Sound System. The audience is mostly under twenty-five; beer flows freely and the occasional smell of hashish wafts through the air. The pre-recorded sound of cicadas – the native insect heard throughout the Midi – is pumped through the speakers as the audience whistles and yells. Suddenly, the cicadas crescendo and sampled voices fill the air: 'We are the new troubadours', says one. The lights lower, signalling the band's entrance. A disk jockey, a keyboardist and four mc's walk on stage, the lights go on, and the concert begins, as several audience members scream '*Chourmo, chourmo*!' They are the *chourmo*, the fans of Occitan rap music. Throughout the evening, Massilia Sound System raps in a mixture of French and Occitan as the *chourmo* near the front dance with abandon. We are repeatedly reminded of the group's status as ambassadors for their hometown of Marseille; one band member holds up a scarf which reads 'Parti Internationaliste et Indépendentiste Marseillais', a fictional political party. Far more so than the New World troubadours surveyed so far, the members of Massilia Sound System believe in their status as the true, living descendants of the troubadours. They celebrate their ancient heritage by fitting it to a unique rap-reggae, or *raggamuffin*, sound. And their immediate goal tonight is to move their audience to its feet. 'Montez l'*aïoli*!' ('Pump up the noise!'), sings Tatou, pointing his microphone at the audience, as it echoes his refrain. The concert goes on until well past midnight, and the audience whistles and screams for several encores.[5]

The stereotyping of the word 'troubadour' which began in the Renaissance and ultimately led to the New World troubadours described earlier has been received with mixed feelings in the medieval troubadours' homeland of Occitania. Many Southerners have opposed popular, reductionistic stereotypes which often pander to a Parisian or otherwise foreign audience, and trigger the South's loss of its own distinctive heritage, a heritage which includes that descendant of the language of the troubadours, Modern Occitan. The re-instatement of Occitan as a viable literary

Figure 3. Massilia Sound System.

language can be credited to the modern Occitanist movement described earlier. The movement has depended upon stalwart seers such as the recently deceased Félix-Marcel Castan (1920–2001), whose influence is barely known in his native France, let alone North America. Yet through his remarkable life and pedagogy, more so than his writings, Castan has inspired younger advocates. Rather than a rigid regionalism or anti-centralism, he has emphasised the need for individual communities to maintain their cultural independence within a pluralistic society (see Castan 1984). Those who, like Castan, have struggled in one way or another to revive Occitan culture and language, have frequently appealed to the troubadours and their music. Castan's influence is especially felt in two musical groups who view themselves as continuators of the troubadours: Toulouse's Fabulous Trobadors and Marseilles' Massilia Sound System (on these groups, see also Boucher 1998, pp. 73–101).

My meeting with Fabulous Trobadors founder Claude Sicre took place at a group supper in a Paris café during a launch for his book entitled *Repas-de-quartier* (Sicre *et al.* 2001). What at first seemed for my purposes a somewhat inconvenient location soon proved the perfect setting, for it illustrated this troubadour's total artistic vision in which eating, talking, writing and playing music all move together. The idea of a *repas-de-quartier* is that of a meal where one's neighbourhood spontaneously comes together, with each resident bringing chairs, tables and food into the open street. Sicre first acted on this vision in his own Toulouse neighbourhood of Arnaud-Bernard, and by the late 1990s, *repas-de-quartier* were popping up across France, culinary raves arranged by word of mouth. For Sicre, the *repas-de-quartier* represent the Castan philosophy in action: neighbourhoods coming together, celebrating their pluralistic identities through meals, discussions and music. The *repas-de-quartier* are, to borrow Stan Slaughter's expression, 'under the radar'. The Paris book launch I was attending had been organised with little media

announcement, and this was how a dozen people met for an evening of lively debate and gestation, with everyone coming and going as they pleased.

After several hours of this, the troubadour, a fifty-some lanky man with unkempt, stringy black hair and fire in his eyes, settled down to be interviewed.[6] How had Claude Sicre arrived at his present career?, I asked. Sicre was born and raised in Toulouse speaking mostly French rather than Occitan, with no original interest in things medieval, either poetry or music. Instead, his teenage passion was US comic strips and rock 'n' roll. He travelled to the United States as a young man, hoping to settle down and become famous before moving back to France; but three months later, he was back home. He had quickly realised, as he put it, that 'it was in France, not in America, that I needed to change things'. He eventually moved to Paris from Toulouse and there, away from his native Occitania, he finally discovered his patrimony, as well as a flourishing Occitanist movement. Sicre noted the irony: 'Only in Paris did I understand that I was Occitan'. He began reading troubadour poetry in earnest and generally discovering 'my own folklore', along with the ideas of Occitan teacher-activist Félix-Marcel Castan mentioned earlier.

Sicre's most important musical revelation came when he visited Brazil in the early 1980s and discovered that country's traditional singers, or *emboladores*. Familiar elements in their music – the African rhythms to which their poetry was adapted and the frequent flat seventh, both of which he had first found in the US blues – encouraged him to work out his own musico-poetic language. As he saw it, the Brazilian *emboladores* had much in common with the troubadours: their close affinity between music and speech, the use of heptasyllabic verse, and especially the poems in the *desafio* genre, a sort of Brazilian *tenso*, as he put it (on the *desafio*, see Crook 1998, pp. 326–7). Returning to Toulouse, Sicre began working out these ideas with poems he wrote, turning to a simple instrument he had played as a poor child on the streets of Toulouse, one which would produce as little interference with the voice as possible: the tambourine.[7]

> I started playing the tambourine when I was seven years old. My father made one for me . . . he showed me how to hit it and the rest I figured out on my own, I went to the marketplace to play between a fish and meat stand, at least there I had my own space . . . When I was done playing, people gave me coins, I held out the tambourine and they fell like rain . . .

As he reconnected with the tambourine and declaimed his poems in this new style, some of his friends called it rap, and this was appropriate; for rap, in Sicre's view, 'is really a much older tradition'. He soon met younger rap musician Jean-Marc Enjalbert (a.k.a. Ange B.) who specialised in vocal percussion, and the Fabulous Trobadors were born: 'Jean-Marc made noises with his mouth and I played the tambourine and sang; we adapted our two styles'.

Both the Fabulous Trobadors and the Massilia Sound System's musical style has been labelled *raggamuffin* (from English slang for 'hoodlum') or simply *ragga*, a genre which combines reggae with rap (Assayas 2000, vol. 2, pp. 1,556–60). In the case of the Fabulous Trobadors, the result is sometimes a little bit of both, without being completely one or the other. Sicre claimed that the only rap piece on their album *On the Linha Imaginòt* (1998) is 'L'accent', one of the few pieces by the group's younger member Ange B., featuring a continuous shuffle and smart, looped samples of distorted sounds and whistles, over which Ange B. furiously stutters 'Le tien c'est le tien, et le mien c'est le mien' ('Yours [i.e. your accent] is yours and mine is mine'). A similar type of music is found in other songs on this album, not the least of which is

'High Tençon', a political poem declaimed rapid-fire by Sicre and Ange B., mostly unaccompanied (see citation below). The Fabulous Trobadors rap in French and Occitan, although the latter is not as frequent as one might expect to find. Of *On the Linha Imaginòt*'s thirteen songs, only two are completely in Occitan ('Riu chiu chiu' and 'Lo fafa'), with some Occitan sprinkled throughout other songs. By singing mostly in French, the Fabulous Trobadors aim to convey their message to as wide an audience as possible. Polylinguism is a theme (as in 'Aici sem'), and other musical influences show up on this recording, from the blues (the opening 'Je ne chante pas mes peines') to traditional méridional song ('Cançon de la Prima').

In comparing his group with Massilia Sound System, Sicre claims that, although they are perhaps not as popular, the Fabulous Trobadors do reach a wider audience, from teenagers to retirees. Why is this?, I asked. To begin with, their use of rap elements ensures a younger following. But older people also listen to the Fabulous Trobadors for three reasons, Sicre points out. For one, the music's volume is not as loud, given the frequent use of simple acoustic instruments such as the tambourine. The style is more traditional, and this tends to appeal to older audiences as well. Finally, their lyrics are, as Sicre put it, a little more complex. 'High Tençon' is a case in point, a dazzling, stream-of-consciousness torrent of homonyms and *enjambements* which can only be poorly translated at best. Here are the seventh and eighth strophes:

> Où c'est qu'on va/on va verser/versets saints/vers singés rhétorique/à la loupe tout y passer/l'histoire de France est toute truquée/Toute truquée Etat français/enseignant les évidences/avec l'égout tout à l'é/l'écouter faut pas le/gouvernement comme il respire
>
> (Where are we going/we are going to verse/holy verses [pun on Vercingétorix]/rhetorical aped verses/everything comes under scrutiny/French history is all flawed/all flawed the French state/teaching that which is evident/gone down the drain [pun on the Parisian ending in é]/one should not listen to/how the government breathes)

There is more than a tenous relationship between Sicre's *repas-de-quartier* and the music of the Fabulous Trobadors, and here is where Sicre's fierce anti-centralism (or, as he might prefer, strong regionalism) shows up. The title of their 1995 album in particular, *Ma ville est le plus beau parc*, makes clear their view of Toulouse; it is the envy of all other cities. The song 'Come on every Baudis' even addresses Toulouse's mayor at the time, Dominique Baudis, asking him to seek for Toulouse the reputation held only by the French capital: 'We want Toulouse to be the capital/at the mercy of no one/a town with no provincial stigma/and giving Paris the finger'.[8] Their 1998 album *On the Linha Imaginòt* is filled with references to the *repas-de-quartier* and Sicre's Toulouse neighbourhood which made them famous, Arnaud Bernard. Two songs are simply entitled 'Naut-Bernat' and 'Naut-Bernat 2' and describe his *quartier* as 'the last of ancient centres' ('le dernier des centres anciens'). The song 'Reportage de quartier' is even more direct, with its 'repas-de-quartier' refrain and sampled voices of neighbours, one of whom explains that 'from Toulouse, we can enlighten France and the whole world; what we are doing here is not extraordinary'.[9] Other songs even evoke the traditional Southern cooking served up at the *repas*: 'L'alh' ('garlic') and 'L'omelette au pastis'. For Sicre and the Fabulous Trobadors, the *repas-de-quartier*, 'folklore in the true sense of the word' (Sicre *et al.* 2001, pp. 33, 71–2), embodies their anti-centralist philosophy. Music is just another dish at the table.

A few steps closer than the Fabulous Trobadors to bands like the Mediæval Bæbes, and mainstream pop in general, is the group Massilia Sound System. Only a few hours south on the fast train from Paris, where I had interviewed Claude Sicre, but

worlds away just the same, lies the ancient coastal city of Marseille. To reach the Massilia's recording studio, the traveller must take yet another train from Marseille's Gare Saint-Charles to the nearby resort town of La Ciotat. It is this more remote location, resounding with the dry song of cicadas and the squeals of nearby bathers, that Massilia Sound System has chosen as the site for their recording studio and publicity activities. When I arrived at the La Ciotat studio, a television film crew was just wrapping up a programme on the group, and we were all herded to a nearby restaurant for a meal with the crew and several group members. The number of members in Massilia Sound System has varied over the years – there were seven at the time of my interview, but its kernel consists of four singers, Gari (Laurent Garibaldi), Lux (Luc Villegas), Papet (René Mazzarino) and Tatou (François Ridel); the latter two are the founding members as well as the group's main songwriters.

Later on that hot summer afternoon, I arrived at the home of Tatou, a block from La Ciotat's ocean front. Unlike the other members of Massilia who are all from the South, Tatou was raised in Paris where he came into contact with Occitan while taking a course on regional dialects in *lycée*. 'I am not biologically Occitan', he confessed, quickly adding that this was the case for most people living in Marseille.[10] Yet most, like Tatou himself, are intensely proud of Marseille as their city. Following a stint as a teacher, he was a disk jockey, as were other members of Massilia Sound System in earlier days. The idea of starting a rap group with a strong Marseillais identity was a propitious one in the 1980s, given the city's flagging reputation at the time. Marseille's reputation during the 1970s as an immigrant and criminal centre, 'a cultural desert', according to Tatou, was further deteriorating. Tatou, Papet and a few other musicians began performing rap music with only a portable 'sound system' to accompany them, eventually moving these private performances to the streets of their city, where their first concert was held and for which they were fined: Massilia Sound System, in Tatou's words, 'was born in the street'.

These street beginnings would have a lasting influence on the group and, as a result, Massilia Sound System's sound is much closer than that of the Fabulous Trobadors to the rap-reggae world: theirs is the *ragamuffin* sound *par excellence.* Their albums abound with explicit references to *raggamuffin*, with the term *ragga* featured in several song titles; specific influences crop up, such as Bob Marley, as heard in the song 'Tafanari', from their 1993 *Chourmo!*: 'To dance in the style of Daddy Bob Marley . . . No, you can't stay put, you *raggamuffin*, you have to evolve or you will end up ''has-been'' '.[11]

The influence which has consistently been central to Massilia's artistic accomplishment is that of the troubadours. As Tatou sees it, the group's attraction to the troubadours is normal, for the medieval singers are the cornerstone of Occitanian heritage. In their earliest efforts to assimilate troubadour music, Massilia, like Sicre of the Fabulous Trobadors, looked to conventional historical or even more folk interpretations.[12]

> At first, we sampled classical interpretations of the troubadours which were really the starting point for our work, [recordings by] early music ensembles . . . We set these to a beat, but very quickly abandoned this method, since we realised that this was not what was interesting . . . What was more interesting was to draw on [older] forms . . . And we started to incorporate troubadour songs near the beginning of several of our songs.

Tatou regards more conventional musical reconstitutions of the past – 'going to sing in churches with re-constructed instruments, and all the rest', as he put it – as lifeless. 'It is pretty, but it does not mean anything . . . it has no living meaning', since the better

part of medieval music is missing, namely, just how it was sung. So Massilia turned instead to living traditions which would supply them with the many missing unknowns of medieval music.

This may have been a bold step, but it is one which the Massilia Sound System felt they were entitled to take, and in this, the living troubadours of Occitania claim a prerogative which no other living troubadour can. Because groups like Massilia Sound System are direct descendants of the original troubadours, it is their privilege to manipulate the *art de trobar* as they see fit. Tatou calls this activity 'fantasizing about (*fantasmer sur*, or 'phantasmagorising') the troubadours':[13]

> We fantasize about the troubadours, we use them as a cultural weapon. They are the monument of our culture and therefore, it is we who are responsible for the troubadours . . . We see Peire Vidal as you would, say, Brian Jones [of the Rolling Stones] rather than a dusty poet; it is no longer the same thing, [you now say]: 'there he was really cooking, there he was freaking out' . . . And what is great about them is that there were these guys who had already fantasized about them who wrote their *vidas*, so you are just adding to this.

Like Claude Marti and the Studio der frühen Musik earlier, the Massilia Sound System has also created their own musical setting of Peire Cardenal's 'Tartarassa ni vòutór'. Tatou declaims the Occitan text to a *raggamuffin* groove, interrupted by rapping in French which warns the listener of 'charlatans' motivated by love of money (2000, track 10 and unpaginated booklet).

In imagining how they might musically fantasise about the troubadours, Massilia did not have to go far, for they were already rooted in a living musical tradition, that of Jamaican reggae music. Of the 'Jamaican model' – as he called it – Tatou says: 'At a certain point, you realise that, in order to rise to the standard of your model, it is not enough to simply copy it, but that you need to re-create its conditions'. What exactly did he mean, I asked? Once assimilated, Tatou answered, Jamaican music needed to be adapted to Occitan life. For one, 'folkloric things have to happen', events such as lottos or *pétanque* games, and Tatou has to be involved in these folkloric events before he can sing about them, 'if not, I have nothing to sing about'. Jamaican culture occasionally offers unexpected connections to Occitania, such as the term *posse*, connected to the Occitan word *chourmo* cited earlier; the best definition Tatou could give of the *chourmo* is a combination of 'team, gang, family or neighbourhood', but with an added pejorative twist. To re-create the Jamaican model's conditions also means restricting oneself to reggae's musical forms and style of singing. Tatou explains:[14]

> The troubadours were singers who evolved in an extremely formal *milieu* . . . something like rap or *raggamuffin*, in the end . . . This encounter [between the *art de trobar* and reggae] was bound to happen. So we started little by little, and instead of taking our cue directly from Jamaican forms, we went to troubadour forms which are quite similar. The Jamaicans have something called 'double trouble,' and 'double trouble' is 'tenso': two people who banter back and forth.

Once this process of imitation and assimilation is accomplished, however, 'you free yourself of your model'. Everyone assimilates these influences differently, be it Massilia Sound System or the Fabulous Trobadors. Tatou nonetheless views both groups as complementary, one more modern and the other more traditional, forming 'a kind of unattackable binome'. He concluded: 'I think we are Occitan reggae'.

Then, like Claude Sicre, the founding members of Massilia discovered the Brazilian troubadours, finding genres and verse types which reminded them of medieval troubadour songs. Tatou noted that some purists would probably ask, 'Why

go find these Brazilian melodies?' To his fictitious accuser he replies with a question and we are back on the topic of the troubadours:[15]

> What do they know? Have you ever seen a troubadour musical score? There is nothing, only a handful of notes . . . So, starting from my experience with living musics, I said to myself, 'Where should the troubadours be?' They should be in a place where they have the same social position, where they are considered important – in other words, in a place where people sing. And, bingo, I find some in Brazil, and not only do I find some, but the people over there tell me, 'Yes, of course, didn't you know that what we do here comes from the medieval troubadours?' Historically, I do not care if this is true, that is not important. But when I listen to a piece by [here he names an 'historical' performance group], I feel like I am at a first-class funeral, whereas when I listen to my version, I feel as if the troubadour wrote it fifteen days ago.

There is another answer to the question of why Massilia Sound System needed to go to Brazil or Jamaica, and that is the suppression of Occitan folklore by Parisian centralisation. The final song on *3968 CR 13*, 'Lei companhs de fin amor', bemoans the centralist suppression of the troubadour heritage: 'Ah! Why must we sing? Because of what they did not tell us in school'.[16] The song goes on to give the lineage of the Massilia Sound System, beginning with Guilhem of Aquitaine – all are 'companhs de fin amor'. Massilia's use of the Occitan language is, on the one hand, the key to the group's identity; on the other, it is an affront to the Paris-centred French popular music industry and, therefore, the main obstacle to Massilia's commercial success.

I then broached the question which I had put to all the other living troubadours: Does Massilia Sound System's work qualify as folk music, and if so, what is folk music? Tatou replied with the image of Citroën's so-called deux-chevaux, the first affordable and utilitarian car in France in the decades following the Second World War. The title of their album *3968 CR 13* is simply the license plate of the deux-chevaux which was the group's first touring mode of transportation. The deux-chevaux is emblematic of folk music, Tatou claims, for it was a popular vehicle which had appealed to drivers of many ages and classes, a versatile and affordable car. Just as the idea of the deux-chevaux was a broadly shared experience, so are Massilia's songs. Their performance belongs just as much to the audience as to themselves. This affects Tatou's view of his role as performer:[17]

> I never feel as if I am the one singing, never. I always feel as if everyone is singing, not I. I sing something which the guy in the front row could sing.

Conclusion

As disparate as the New World and Occitan troubadours may seem, they are both deeply influenced by the contemporary musical *lingua franca*, US popular music, and in particular the blues, which Susan McClary has deemed 'the music that has most shaped our own era' (McClary 2000, p. 34). To summarise my arguments here, the Fabulous Trobadors draw especially on the blues and rock 'n' roll, and Massilia Sound System on reggae and rap; both groups reject historical performance and the realm of early music as 'having no living meaning', as Tatou put it to me. Some might accuse the living Occitan troubadours of musical compromise for having borrowed a US art form. But this very connectedness to a living musical tradition is what confirms contemporary Occitan troubadours as successors of the medieval *art de trobar*. It is their unique rock-reggae-rap hybrid, they feel, which raises them above the more conventional performances of the historical tradition.

More importantly, all of the living troubadours surveyed in this essay, both in North America and in Europe, follow in the long reception of troubadour music which began with the medieval chansonniers in the late thirteenth century. Even the New World troubadours, who may seem only tenuously connected to the medieval ones, continue this rich reception. For them, as for those in contemporary Occitania, the roots of ancient traditions are found in popular, 'low' traditions, since living folk traditions are seen as magically preserving something of the Middle Ages. Thus the Middle Ages are less a remote, fixed point in history than a living presence to be both researched and re-created; there is little distinction between the historical and the creative, the scientific and the popular. For all these musicians, the word 'troubadour' is not used accidentally, but with the specific intent of connecting with a genealogy which stretches back to at least the sixteenth century, if not earlier. The 'troubadour' is an old but still quite living stereotype which bridges genres (pop/folk/historical) and harks back to one of the most enduring stereotypes of the Middle Ages. Each one of the groups surveyed here represents in a different way the same idea.

The unique answers which each troubadour has found to their own musical questions help to flesh out our picture of the reception of medieval music described at the beginning of this article. What, broadly speaking, constitutes medieval music today? As both Robert Lug and Kay Shelemay have suggested, early music is a combination of historical documentation and creative, contemporary approaches. It is necessary to fit early music into the larger picture of contemporary medieval music reception. In a way, medieval music *is* its reception. The extent to which we re-create and imagine the Middle Ages is the extent of our knowledge of it, and even scholarly knowledge – whether we admit it or not – instinctively adopts such stereotypes as surveyed in this essay. I have described the broad range of this reception, from the more traditional early music ensembles, through the Studio der frühen Musik's combination of popular and historical genres, down (so to speak) to Massilia Sound System's rap-reggae *art de trobar.* Massilia Sound System are not the only ones to, as Tatou put it, 'fantasize about the troubadours'. The wide-ranging performances of medieval music in the twentieth century I have described here all constitute a reception, an interpretation of medieval music traditions. These traditions as now experienced and defined have their idiosyncratic journey from the late thirteenth century up to the present.

This varied panorama, which has here only received a preliminary overview, illustrates the still vast potential of the Middle Ages for fresh approaches in present-day musicology, ones which reach beyond the more conventional (but still necessary) work in medieval music studies. I have argued here for the interaction of medieval music study and other research areas within and without musicology. The troubadours, who have a prominent place both in traditional medieval music study and in popular culture, illustrate this well. Their musical reception is a long one, stretching from the late Middle Ages until the present time. It is also a varied one, from the late thirteenth-century chansonniers codifying their songs to the living troubadours described in this article. The questions raised by medieval music reception reach to musicological fields outside medieval studies, but especially ethnomusicology and popular music studies. For all of the musicians surveyed here, folk music constitutes a fluid tradition which defies categorisation and adapts to very different circumstances. Folk music is considered by some a specific genre of the 1960s evoked by Wilfrid Mellers, and by others as rock 'n' roll, reggae or rap. The message of the *art de trobar* is equally varied, from a North American environmentalism to the

anti-centralist message of Occitanism. As illustrated by these artists, medieval music reception stands today at the intersection of all of these genres, and leads quite naturally to other musicological paths.

A renewed interest in medieval music study as here more widely defined would come at a propitious time, given the widespread popular interest in the Middle Ages described at the beginning of this article. We are all familiar with images which regularly suggest the Middle Ages in advertisements and movies: the chanting monk, the damsel in distress, the jousting knight, and so on. The troubadour, too, is such an icon. Troubadour song pops up in a variety of places, one such being the performance by the Medæval Bæbes evoked at the beginning of this article, and to which I now briefly return for my conclusion.

Following the intermission on the same evening described earlier, the Mediæval Bæbes underwent the first of what would be two full costume changes by evening's end. Having slowly processed back on stage, they were about to launch into that medieval hit 'Can vei la lauzeta mover' by the late twelfth-century troubadour Bernart de Ventadorn (recorded on Medæval Bæbes 2000, track 3). Nearly forgetting her cue, fair-haired Carmen Schneider prefaced their performance by explaining the song's narrative in which the lover Bernart compared himself to a sparrow wounded by joy. The eight voices then began singing, accompanied only by an acoustic guitar. On the one hand, their version of the troubadour's melody followed that of the medieval chansonniers rather closely, a literalness reminiscent of a more historical approach. On the other hand, the dark club and its smoky stage where resonated the slow chordal changes marked by the guitar; the fragile, breathy unison voices of the Mediæval Bæbes – all these put this performance squarely in the present. The audience listening that night may have been hard put to later recall just what kind of strange musical antiquity we had entered. But there was no question as to the object of evocation: the Middle Ages.

Endnotes

1. The Mediæval Bæbes performed at Lee's Palace in Toronto, 4 May 2002. More information can be found on their website at <www.mediaeval-baebes.com>. For research on this article, I would like to thank the Association Française de Washington for a Gilbert Chinard Fellowship in the summer of 2001 and the National Endowment for the Humanities for a Summer Research stipend in the summer of 2002. I am grateful to Jim Kippen, Leanne Fetterley, Robert Lug, Randall Rosenfeld, Kay Kaufman Shelemay, and two anonymous readers who critiqued earlier versions of this essay. My thanks also to Salah, Zakiah, Malik and Rachid Messaoudène, Guy and Muriel Abonnenc, and Caroline Bonheur for their hospitality, transportation and general assistance in Marseille and Grenoble. This article grew out of research for my forthcoming book on the reception of troubadour and trouvère music.
2. Shelemay (2001). Shelemay's study grew out of a research project at Harvard University in collaboration with Thomas Kelly, Carol Babiracki and a group of undergraduate and graduate students. Her work may be seen as part of a growing literature in the ethnomusicological study of 'Western' music, as seen in Kingsbury (1988), Bohlman (1989) and Nettl (1995), for example.
3. All quotations are taken from a telephone interview with Kevin Briody at his Ridgefield, Connecticut home on 19 June 2001.
4. Citations are taken from e-mail and phone interviews made on 13 and 15 June 2001 with Stan Slaughter at his New Mexico home.
5. Massilia Sound System performed at the 2002 'Rencontres Jacques Brel' festival on the evening of 17 July 2002, at Saint-Pierre de Chartreuse, outside of Grenoble.
6. Unless otherwise indicated, all citations are taken from an interview with Claude Sicre at the Moroquinerie restaurant in Paris (23, rue Boyer) on 11 July 2001.
7. Sicre 2000, p.9: J'ai commencé à jouer du tambourin, j'avais sept ans. C'est mon père qui me l'a fabriqué . . . il m'a montré comment il fallait frapper et après je me suis débrouillé tout seul, j'allais jouer sur les marchés, entre un marchand de poissons et un marchand de viande, j'avais la place, là, on me foutait la

paix ... les gens me donnaient des pièces, quand j'avais fini de chanter, je tendais le tambourin et c'était comme s'il en pleuvait ...'

8. 'On veut Toulouse-Capitale/De personne à la merci/Sans vergogne provinciale/Et qui dise merde à Paris'.
9. 'Depuis Toulouse, on peut éclairer la France et le monde entier; ce qu'on fait là, ça n'a rien d'extraordinaire'.
10. 'Biologiquement, je suis absolument pas occitan'. Unless otherwise indicated, all citations are taken from an interview with Tatou at his La Ciotat home on 25 July 2001.
11. 'Skanker à la manière de Poupa Bob Marley ... Mais faut pas rester bloqué non! Raggamuffin/Il faut évoluer sinon tu finiras has-been'. Massilia Sound System, *Chourmo*! (1993), track six.
12. 'Au début on a samplé des interprétations classiques des troubadours. C'est vraiment les trucs avec lesquels on a fonctionné: des groupes de musique ancienne ... On mettait ça sur du beat, mais très rapidement on s'est éloigné de ça; on a très vite vu que c'était pas ça qui était intéressant ... Mais ce qui est intéressant, c'est de pomper la forme ... Et puis on a commencé beaucoup de chansons en chantant des chansons de troubadours'.
13. 'On fantasme sur les troubadours, on s'en sert d'arme culturelle. C'est notre monument de notre culture, donc, c'est nous les responsables des troubadours ... Quand tu les vois comme ça, tu les découvres plus de la même façon ... Tu vois Peire Vidal comme tu vois, j'sais pas, Brian Jones, plutôt qu'un truc poussiéreux, c'est pas pareil: 'là il était déchaîné, là il est défoncé' ... Ce qui est génial avec eux, c'est qu'il y avait déjà des mecs qui avaient fantasmé sur eux qui ont fait des *vidas*, ils fantasment aussi sur eux, donc en plus t'en rajoute'.
14. 'Les troubadours, c'est des chanteurs qui évoluent dans un milieu vachement formel ... C'est un peu comme le rap ou le raggamuffin, finalement ... C'était fatal que ça se rencontre, quoi. Donc, on a commencé petit à petit, au lieu d'aller piquer nos influences sur les formes directement jamaïquennes, aller piquer nos influences sur les formes troubadouresques qui sont très proches. Les jamaïquens ont un truc qui s'appelle le *double trouble*, et le *double trouble* c'est la *tenso*: ils sont deux et ils s'embrouillent'.
15. 'Qu'est-ce-qu'ils en savent? T'as déjà vu une partition de troubadour? Il y a rien dessus, il y a trois notes ... Donc moi, me basant sur mon experience de musiques vivantes, je me dis 'Où ils doivent être, les troubadours?' Ils doivent être dans un endroit où ils ont la même position sociale, où ils sont importants, là où il y a des gens qui chantent dans le monde, quoi. Et, clac, moi j'en trouve au Brésil. Et non seulement j'en trouve, mais les mecs là-bas, ils disent, 'Alors bien sur, vous savez pas, nous, ce qu'on fait, ça vient des troubadours du moyen âge?' Historiquement, je m'en fous que ce soit vrai, ça n'a pas d'importance. Mais quand j'écoute le truc de [musical group] j'ai l'impression que c'est un enterrement de première classe, et quand j'écoute mon truc, j'ai l'impression que le mec, il l'a écrit il y a quinze jours'.
16. 'Ai! Perqué nos va fau cantar? Per que v'an pas dich a l'escòla'.
17. 'Moi, j'ai jamais l'impression que c'est moi qui chante, jamais. J'ai toujours l'impression que c'est tout le monde qui chante, pas moi. Je chante un truc que le mec du premier rang pourrait chanter'.

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